

Putting Pen to Paper - Composing Effective Written Feedback

David Saloum, MD, MACM
Residency Program Director
Medical Education Fellowship Director
Maimonides Medical Center, Brooklyn, NY

Learning Objectives for this workshop

1. Understand the importance of written feedback in the context of all types of feedback
2. Identify which type of feedback is most appropriate for the (delayed) written format
3. Discuss appropriate content for written feedback
4. Recognize potential pitfalls in writing feedback

Trainees are involved in multiple activities, but the majority of their time interacting with faculty will be in the clinical setting. This workshop will focus on feedback that will occur in the context of patient care activities, but may be applicable to other educational settings as well.

The nature of our jobs in emergency medicine will generally mandate that immediate feedback be largely verbal in nature (although one should never discount the importance of non-verbal communication!) and that written feedback will be delayed to some degree (although delayed feedback may include verbal and other forms too).

Why do we need written feedback?

1. A record of the formative feedback given to trainees can be useful for the residency leadership when creating summative evaluations (program centered)
2. Not everyone communicates best verbally and written feedback allows time to tailor the message appropriately (faculty centered)
3. Written feedback can reinforce what was discussed in real time and continue to build on the scaffolding of previous learning (trainee centered)
4. Written feedback creates a lasting record that can be revisited by the learner over and over (trainee centered)
5. The benefits of immediate feedback assume *that the trainee is ready to receive it*, however this may not be the case (trainee centered)
6. Some feedback is more effective when delayed

When is delayed feedback better than immediate?

1. *Interference-perseveration hypothesis* suggests that delayed feedback is superior because there needs to be a washout period to forget competing incorrect information
2. Delayed feedback may improve future performance with difficult tasks
3. Delayed feedback may be related to improved long-term retention
4. Emotionally charged events

What is appropriate content for written feedback?

Anonymous vs non-anonymous

Research suggests that learner's response to feedback is dependent on the working relationship. It is difficult to respect the feedback without having a face to associate with it

Praise – Why are we doing a bad job when we tell our learners “good job!”

Everyone likes praise, however research has shown praise to be an ineffective form of feedback

Without task-related information it is unlikely to create more engagement, commitment to the learning goals, enhanced self-efficacy, or understanding about the task

Some students may characterize praise after success or neutral feedback after failure as an indication that the teacher perceived their ability to be low. Conversely, when given criticism after failure and neutral feedback after success, they perceived that the teacher had estimated their ability to be high and their effort low

Positive vs negative feedback

Both have potentially beneficial effect to learning

Positive feedback can increase the likelihood that students will return to or persist in an activity and students self-report higher interest in the activity

When students are committed to learning goals, receiving negative feedback causes individuals to become more dissatisfied with their previous performance level, set higher performance goals for their future performance, and perform at a higher level than those who receive positive feedback or no feedback at all